Procurement of rough diamonds from Congo and Russia

4140. SHRI S. RAMACHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the Minister for COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether a delagation each was to visit Democratic Republic of Congo and Russia in the tender proceedings and for making bids for direct procurement of rough diamonds;

(b) if so, dates of visit by the delegation; and

(c) whether the delegation was able to procure directly rough diamonds from the said countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. A delegation comprising representatives of Department of Commerce, MMTC and Gem & Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC) visited Russia from 13th to 18th December, 2000. Another delegation of representatives of GJEPC visited Societe Minere de Bakwanga (MIBA) in the Democratic Republic of Congo, from 7th to 13th December, 2000 to explore the possibility of direct procurement of rough diamonds from them.

(c) So far as Russia is concerned during the visit of the delegation, a contract for the supply of rough diamonds valued at US $ 4.46 million was signed. However, the sale of the rough diamonds is yet to be materialised. As regards supply from MIBA of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Indian delegation took part in the tenders, but did not succeed in direct supply of rough diamonds.

Import of Plywood

†4141. PROF. R.B.S. VARMA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that plywood is being imported in the country on a large scale and thus the domestic plywood industry has come into grip of crisis;

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) if so, what measures are being adopted by Government to save the plywood industry from this crisis; and

(c) the reasons for importing plywood?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) to (c) The import of Plywood has been free since prior to 1.4.1996 from the point of view of reducing pressure on our forests. However, import of Plywood has been declining as is evident from the figures mentioned below:—

Year	Value (Rs. lakh)
1998-99	3744.36
1999-2000	2423.76
2000-2001 (upto Nov. 2000)	1405.41

Decline in trade with neighbouring countries

†4142. PROF. R. B. S. VARMA: *Will the Minister of* COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the trade between India and its neighbouring countries has declined during the last three years;

(b) if so, the year-wise details thereof; and

(c) the names of the neighbouring countries with which trade took place during the said period?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) to (c) The year-wise details of India's trade with neighbouring countries namely China, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, and Maldives during the last three years are given below:—

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.